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# **Glossary of Intelligence Terms and Definitions**

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## PREFACE

This publication is the product of an interagency working group formed by the National Foreign Intelligence Board in September 1977, and composed of representatives from the organizations which constitute the Intelligence Community.

This publication is designed to be a reference and guidance document for interdepartmental communications and understanding within the Intelligence Community and is a means of fostering communication with other Executive Branch organizations and with the Congress and the Judiciary. The glossary reflects only those intelligence terms commonly used within and definitions commonly accepted by the Community. It does not include organizationally peculiar terms or definitions nor does it include such details as could be addressed only in a classified document.

The value of this document is dependent upon its currency and completeness; thus, it is expected that changes will occur as new terms evolve and as definitions change. Users are encouraged to submit proposed corrections, additions, deletions, or amendments through their Intelligence Community representative to the Executive Secretary, National Foreign Intelligence Board. The interagency working group will support the Executive Secretary and will be responsible for a review of proposed changes, an annual review of the entire document for currency and adequacy, and the submission of recommended changes to the National Foreign Intelligence Board.

Although this document has been designed to enhance the efficiency of communications within the Intelligence Community, it is hoped that it will also contribute to language commonality throughout the intelligence field. In this regard, authors of other intelligence glossaries and of other special-use glossaries which contain intelligence terms are encouraged to consider the terms and definitions contained herein.

The definitions in this glossary may not coincide precisely with definitions used elsewhere for departmental or legal purposes, especially where definitions were devised for the purpose of supporting and clarifying the language of a legal document. However, terms which have been given other definitions have been annotated with a reference to Appendix B, which contains the term and the definition or definitions and cites the source document. Current publications and documents known to contain intelligence terms and definitions, to include those definitions contained in Appendix B, are listed in the index at Appendix C.

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## METHODOLOGY

The definitions in this glossary have been devised by intelligence officers, not by philologists or semanticists. Some definitions, therefore, may have limited applicability outside the Intelligence Community, while other definitions may be restricted to the single use of a word which has intelligence significance; as, for example, in the word *source*. Insofar as possible, however, the definitions included here contain a measure of consistency of form, and an attempt has been made to establish relationships among important intelligence words and terms. A basic example exists in the relationships to be found among the terms *information*, *intelligence information* and *intelligence*. William R. Corson, in his *The Armies of Ignorance*, observed:

A word of caution about the term *intelligence* is in order. Too often it is used synonymously or interchangeably with *information*. This is inaccurate and quite misleading. Information until and unless it has been analyzed and evaluated remains nothing more than a fact. Information may be interesting, amusing, or hitherto unknown to the person receiving it, but by and in itself it is inappropriate to call it intelligence. The three terms *intelligence*, *intelligence information*, and *information* need to remain distinct. Intelligence by itself refers to the meaning of, or a conclusion about, persons, events, and circumstances which is derived from analysis and/or logic. Intelligence information consists of facts bearing on a previously identified problem or situation, the significance of which has not been completely established. And information is made of raw facts whose relationship to other phenomena has yet to be considered or established. Similarly, the methods involved in acquiring information and/or intelligence information by any means and turning it into intelligence constitute the intelligence process or cycle. The distinctions between these terms are important to remember. . . .

This glossary makes similar distinctions: *information* is unevaluated material of every description, *intelligence information* is information of potential intelligence value, and *intelligence* is the knowledge derived from a cyclical processing of information. The articulation of these differences is fundamental to the repeated use of these terms in defining other terms. One will find, for example, that nuclear intelligence is defined as *intelligence* derived from the collection and analysis of radiation, etc., whereas communications intelligence is defined as technical and *intelligence information* derived from the intercept of foreign communications, etc. (not yet analyzed, it is not yet *intelligence*). Such fine distinctions are expected to contribute to a broader understanding of the common meanings of many such terms.

Arriving at a suitable definition for the word *intelligence* is a challenge unto itself. In Sherman Kent's *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, *intelligence* is characterized as having three definitional subsets: knowledge, organization, and activity. This concept is particularly useful in establishing the fact that *intelligence* in the current context has multiple meanings.

*Intelligence*, he says, is the knowledge that our nation must possess regarding other nations in order to assure itself that its interests will not fail because of planning or decisionmaking done in ignorance; and upon which knowledge our national foreign

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policy is based. *Intelligence* is also an institution; . . . a physical organization of living people which pursues the special kind of knowledge at issue. And *intelligence* is the activity which the organization performs: research, analysis, collection, evaluation, study, presentation, and myriad others.

As helpful as they are, Kent's definitions are excessively delimiting for purposes of this glossary. In the sense that intelligence is knowledge, for example, one cannot assume that all intelligence is "our" intelligence. It is necessary, therefore, to fashion the most basic definition possible for the word *intelligence* in this sense of its meaning, trusting in the utilizer's ability to select a proper modifier to give the word more precise meaning when that is necessary. More definitional flexibility results from such an approach.

But *intelligence* is more than the knowledge contained in an intelligence product. It encompasses the intelligence organizations and activities that Kent refers to, and other activities—and their resultant products—which are known as *counterintelligence*. For these reasons, one might be tempted to define *intelligence* simply as a generic term which encompasses both foreign intelligence and foreign counterintelligence, thence to formulate separate definitions for each of those terms. One quickly discovers, however, that such a simplistic approach is insufficiently satisfying because it fails to provide for several shades of meaning and subsequent use.

The problem is compounded by the scores of different types of intelligence that are used commonly and which must be broadly understood, and by the variety of headings under which these types of intelligence are classified. Some types of intelligence are source-oriented (such as human intelligence or signals intelligence), some form-oriented (as in raw or unfinished intelligence), some system-oriented (electronic or telemetric), some subject-oriented (medical, economic), some use-oriented (military, tactical), and a probable host of others. But the point to be made here is how essential the basic definition of *intelligence* is to further understanding of the many, many ways in which it can be used. The definition of *intelligence* as it appears in this glossary attempts to account for all of the foregoing.

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The reader will notice frequent cross-referencing between terms and their definitions. In addition to providing an intelligence lexicon, the glossary purports to be tutorial, inasmuch as it is possible, and frequent cross-referencing is a technique employed intentionally to that end.

The term cross-referenced most often is *intelligence cycle* which, with its separately defined steps, is conceptually fundamental to understanding the vocabulary of intelligence. The definitional technique is to list the steps in the cycle as subsets of it (rather than in their normal alphabetical order in the glossary), and to refer many related terms to the cycle and its various steps. The desired result is to keep the reader's focus on the intelligence cycle in order to maintain the conceptual integrity of its component steps.

The drafters of the definitions contained in this glossary were not constrained by existing definitions or by the narrow meaning of terms where broader significance could be achieved by redefinition. Known definitions were nevertheless accommodated to the greatest extent possible. The primary objective of the drafters was to define those terms that lacked definition and to improve on those definitions extant.

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